

## **COMMITTEE ON LANDS AND BUILDINGS**

**November 3, 2004**

**5:00 PM**

Chairman Thibault called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Thibault, Roy, Gatsas, Porter

Absent: Alderman Osborne

Messrs: B. Vigneault, Alderman Lopez, R. MacKenzie

Chairman Thibault addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Communication from Carol Johnson, Deputy City Clerk requesting a Committee recommendation to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen relative to the St. Joseph's Meals on Wheels program.

Barbara Vigneault, Elderly Services Director, stated I submitted the report to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen for the operations for the meal program. The building was designed considering that the meal program would be moving into the commercial kitchen part of the Senior Center, and that was the design plan, so that they could operation the meal program, both the current meal program and the Meals on Wheels program out of the new building. St. Joseph's Community Services has a contract with the Elderly Services department and so it was assumed by City staff that St. Joe's would be coming with the department since the contract was with the department to the new Senior Center. St. Joseph's Community Services is currently operating out of the old West Side Senior Center because the West Side Senior Center was there at 76 North Main Street and so that was the plan. So it is understood now that the Lands and Buildings Committee is hearing this issue because there has been discussion of the meal program staying in the old West Side Senior Center. So this comes before the Lands and Buildings as clarification on the real intent of whether that program is contractual with Elderly Services go into the new building or whether to just stay in the old one and that's the reason why it's here before the committee. In my report I had stated that St. Joseph's has been doing a great job serving people at the current site, at the West Side Senior Center, but it has been the assumption that it go to the new building, then that is where we have had the directive that we continue with that

assumption. So it is up to this board. It was the directive from the Mayor's office to continue the plan as it was assumed that St. Joe's would be moving to the new building.

Alderman Gatsas asked if you had a directive from the Mayor's office, why is this before us?

Ms. Vigneault answered until this could be decided by this committee that we would continue with that plan. So St. Joseph's is here if you want to ask Megan Brady who is the Executive Director any further questions on the program itself.

Chairman Thibault stated I'm a trustee of the Library and the Mayor and I had told the Library that once the new center was built with the kitchen that would be built in the new Senior Center, that the Library could then occupy the whole building, the existing old fire station.

Alderman Lopez stated some accusations have been said in the past and I want to make it very clear as to what transpired. I had a couple of commissioners from the Elderly Center contact me and ask me one day and I said I don't know. I haven't heard anything whether they were going to stay there, move into the new building, or not, and as Barbara said this has been a going on thing and that's how the committee ended up with it because the commissioners have a different philosophy and difference with the director and the Mayor from the correspondence I read. And I just want to just make sure the committee is aware of it. Secondly, it makes no difference to me at this stage of the game other than given that they're conversation to the commissioners that put a lot of work and effort. When I questioned a couple of times, I was told that the decision was made and then I asked the Mayor about it and he said no decision was made, the Lands and Buildings Committee will make that decision. So that's how it all started. I just want to make that point very clear to the committee here because I know some people have been saying that I'm against the Library going in there. I'm not against the Library going in there. I'm not against the Meals on Wheels going upstairs, staying there, or if the committee decides to move them into the new building, I can assure you that during any conversation that I've ever had in the new Senior Center, no decision that I've ever known of was to do anything because we originally wanted 27,000 square feet versus 15,000 square feet and I think you know the history of all of that. But I wanted to set the record straight for the committee and you decide whatever you want to do.

Deputy Clerk Johnson stated the reason it was brought into the committee is because the committee has not officially acted and typically this committee has jurisdiction for any lands or buildings that the City has and then ultimately the Board of Mayor and Aldermen makes decisions based on the committee's

recommendations and that is why I brought it forward because there obviously was some confusion and it's my understanding St. Joseph's was not sure whether they were supposed to be moving or not moving and obviously they can't move into a City facility if the City hasn't approved it officially in some capacity. So that's why I brought it to the committee.

Chairman Thibault stated well I know for a fact that the Mayor is with me one thousand percent behind this thing because him and I talked to the Library people about a year and half to two years ago before we started the West Side Center and it was with the understanding that once the new center was built and with that new modern facility kitchen in that area, that the old building would revert to the Library completely as compared to now they use about 2/3 of the building. So that's where that's at.

Alderman Gatsas asked Mr. MacKenzie refresh my memory. The total cost of the Senior Center was about \$4 million?

Mr. MacKenzie answered \$3.5 million.

Alderman Gatsas stated it's been a while since we've talked about it. In that \$3.5 million, don't I remember that the kitchen was laid out with plumbing for Meals on Wheels?

Mr. MacKenzie answered yes. It was set up for the needs of Meals on Wheels.

Alderman Gatsas asked and wasn't the equipment part of that \$3.5 million?

Mr. MacKenzie answered yes it was.

Alderman Gatsas stated I guess I'm confused.

Chairman Thibault stated well the only thing missing is the stove, as I understand it, everything else is there but the stove.

Alderman Gatsas asked I know, but why are we having this discussion if the original purpose was to put in kitchen equipment and put the Meals on Wheels in there? Why are we even talking about staying in the old building?

Chairman Thibault stated because Carol says that this committee has to formally authorize that.

Alderman Gatsas stated I would have thought Mr. Chairman that the formal movement on that by this committee and the full Board would have been when we

approved the Senior Center at \$3.5 million, with plumbing and wiring and equipment for a kitchen. I would think. I could be wrong.

Chairman Thibault stated well when I saw this come through I figured it has to come through here formally, I guess.

Alderman Porter stated as new Alderman I'm necessarily up on all of the background and I certainly don't have any problem and Megan Brady certainly needs to know for Meals on Wheels where they're going. If they have been operating under the assumption that when this place is built, that they would move there, and with all due respect to the Mayor, if he talks about committing space that has to be approved, I'm not prepared to commit any space to the Library this evening and that's before us, I realize that. So what is before us I have to understand this, and Barbara I'm not hearing anything too strongly from you one way or the other. In your report you do write that things can be worked out, that basically that it was built for that, with that in mind, and I think that it's kind of changing horses in midstream at some later date to decide well at this point maybe they shouldn't go in there. Now if the only thing missing is a stove, now in a kitchen that's probably 90 percent of it. That's like saying the only thing wrong with my car is I don't have a steering wheel. Other than that it's a great automobile. Where is the stove coming from and why is it not there if that was part of...I'll back up. Was that part of the equipment allocated for the...?

Chairman Thibault stated could we have Megan Brady come up first.

Ms. Vigneault stated the commercial kitchen was set up to be a commercial kitchen. The difference was that because of project costs, it wasn't equipped with some of the commercial equipment. So it's plumbed and electrical for a commercial kitchen, but some of the equipment that would be of a commercial nature was not put in because of the funding. So the commercial stove was part of that reduction. That was not submitted. So that's why it's lacking the stove area.

Megan Brady, Meals on Wheels, stated to address the issue about the stove. We have been going back and forth about this for a couple of months now, but it had looked promising that we were moving in there. I wrote a grant. I had talked to Barbara about this a while ago and originally we were talking about having dishes to go in the commercial dishwasher so that it would be a nice setting for whoever comes in to use the congregate dining room as well as those who assist with the Meals on Wheels program. The people who come in and use the congregate dining program often use the other services at the Senior Center. Meals programs are brought into the Senior Center, but we wanted to get some nice dishes and some decent flatware, table clothes. But on top of that when I heard that there was

a lack of a stove I wrote a grant and I really strongly believe that we will be able to get a stove for the kitchen. So that piece would be taken care of.

Alderman Porter stated assuming you move in with the Senior Center, how much of the day would you be occupying that on every day? Would it be exclusively your kitchen?

Mr. Brady replied there are two kitchens there. There is the commercial and there's one that is used for the Senior Center purposes.

Alderman Porter asked but would the commercial kitchen be used exclusively for your operation?

Mr. Brady replied I don't know about after we're there because we would be leaving around 2:00PM.

Alderman Porter stated I guess that was my questions. What are your hours of operation, where you would need the full facility and it's a five day a week operation?

Ms. Brady answered its five days a week and we would be there fairly early in the morning for the delivery of the food that's cooked in bulk through the luncheon hour.

Alderman Porter asked so if someone wanted to do a luncheon over there, they could not because it would be in use by the Meals on Wheels program?

Ms. Brady answered yes but it also depends on what the function is for. Because we've often worked with other groups that want to come in. Especially if it's for seniors we can work together.

Alderman Roy stated Barbara, Mayor or maybe even Jeff of the commission. In the commission report one of the lines that caught my eye was under A., it is a belief of the commission that the City of Manchester is the only entity that does not receive rent for space provided is the St. Joseph's programming. Could we just address that?

Ms. Brady replied we have sites located throughout the county. In some we pay a very nominal amount or there's some other kind of exchange, and in some we pay some rent, that's true. In the City of Manchester we have the largest number of people being served here in the home-delivered program and we have quite a growing need here especially on the West Side. And we do receive funding from the City of Manchester and it almost becomes the point of what pocket do you

take it out of and what pocket do you put it into. But since we've been doing this, the first year we provided Meals on Wheels in 1977, the whole program throughout the county, we served 150,000. Last year we served 343,000 meals. The need is increasing and especially in the home-delivered area. The funding that we receive from the City of Manchester is very gratefully received and is an important part of each meal that we serve in the area. But the need is growing dramatically. We have a lot of fund raising and other work in the City to make sure that we can continue to meet that waiting list. Forty percent of the Meals on Wheels programs in the country have a waiting list.

Alderman Gatsas stated just a follow up on where you were. Do we have a waiting list here in Manchester for food?

Ms. Brady answered no sir and I hope we don't.

Alderman Porter stated Jeff Bolduc I think while you're here I would like to have an opportunity just to hear what Officer Bolduc has to say.

Jeffrey Bolduc, Chairman, Elderly Services Commission, stated the commission in their advisory report to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen advise that they should stay or consider the thought of them staying in the existing facility for a variety of reasons that are listed in the report. What I wanted to clarify tonight is strictly just to light housekeeping because there is a tabled matter before this committee and I thought it was in fairness to Megan's program that she have a definitive answer; is she or is she not moving, and that was the main reason for asking for this meeting. The use of space I believe is another issue at another time.

On motion of Alderman Gatsas, duly seconded by Alderman Roy, it was voted that Meals on Wheels move to the new Senior Center.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion of Alderman Roy, duly seconded by Alderman Porter, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee